

The *Experiment Station Record*, 1933-46¹

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THE United States Department of Agriculture discontinued the publication of the *Experiment Station Record* at the end of 1946. This abstracting service was a valuable one to all land-grant college libraries, and its discontinuance was a blow to their reference service. Because it had been an essential tool and it was believed that some of its material was not abstracted in any other publications, the writers decided to make a study of its entries.

Two issues of the *Record* for each year, 1933 through 1946, were analyzed for (1) subjects covered, (2) up-to-dateness of abstracting, (3) ratio of foreign publications abstracted, and difference in lapse of time between publication and abstracting of foreign and domestic material.

Subjects Covered

It was found that the *Record* covered the following subjects:

1. Soils and fertilizers
2. Agricultural botany
3. Genetics
4. Field crops
5. Horticulture
6. Forestry
7. Diseases of plants
8. Economic zoology and entomology
9. Animal production
10. Dairy farming and dairying

11. Veterinary medicine
12. Agricultural and biological chemistry
13. Foods and human nutrition
14. Agricultural engineering
15. Agricultural economics
16. Rural sociology
17. Agricultural meteorology
18. Agricultural and home economics education
19. Home management and equipment
20. Textiles and clothing

The first eleven of these subjects deal with some phase of biology, and it was found that *Biological Abstracts* entered practically all of the biological publications abstracted in the *Experiment Station Record* whether periodicals, books, or documents; it also had more foreign entries than the *Record*. In the later years it is as up-to-date as the *Record*.

Chemical Abstracts covers agricultural and biological chemistry adequately, and *Nutrition Abstracts* fully covers the subject of foods and human nutrition. Thus, the first thirteen subjects formerly abstracted services by the *Record* are well covered by other abstracting services. This is not true of the last seven subjects.

The *Engineering Index* lists articles on agricultural engineering and annotates most of these. However, these annotations are usually brief and indicate the scope of material covered but do not comment on results.

Books on agricultural economics and rural sociology are reviewed in journals on these subjects. *Rural Sociology* lists some documents but no periodicals, and omits

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many essential documents. The journals on economics list neither periodical articles nor government documents.

We have been unable to find any abstracting service which covers agricultural meteorology, agricultural and home economics education, and home management and equipment. The chemical aspect of textiles and clothing is covered in *Chemical Abstracts*, but no other phases are dealt with in any service which we examined.

In 1938 Harold W. Hayden, a student in the Department of Library Science, University of Michigan, made a study comparing the *Experiment Station Record* and the *Agricultural Index*, and in 1940 another student, Genevieve A. Pohle, continued this study. Together they covered the period from January 1936 through June 1937 "to determine the completeness of each and the amount of duplication in services."

Miss Pohle found that only 10 per cent of the journals abstracted in the *Experiment Station Record* are indexed in the *Agricultural Index*. The *Experiment Station Record* is selective in its abstracting and covers a much wider range of subjects. Since one is an abstracting service and the other an indexing service, the two publications complement rather than duplicate each other.

Up-to-Dateness of Abstracting

A good abstracting service cannot expect to list entries of publications issued this month or last. It does a good job if it can enter material within six months of date of

publication. The abstracting in the *Record* appeared to be as nearly up-to-date as that in other abstracting services.

Foreign Material

There was no apparent difference between the date of entries of foreign and domestic publications. Foreign entries over this period varied widely because the present study covered prewar, war, and postwar years. That part of the study is not considered significant.

Conclusions

It was found that about 12 per cent of the entries in the *Experiment Station Record* were not adequately abstracted in any service that was examined. It covered documents and periodicals published in the United States very adequately, and also entered many foreign publications. It also abstracted many books briefly. It did not cover foreign material as completely as does *Biological Abstracts* and *Chemical Abstracts*.

A subject abstracting service naturally covers its field far more completely than a general one which tries to cover all subjects pertaining to all phases of agriculture and home economics.

It is recommended that the *Experiment Station Record* be revived or that a new publication be started which would abstract nonbiological, nonchemical publications. Such a publication should be much smaller and less expensive to issue than the *Record* had been.